



The Positive Politeness Strategy on Ordering and Requesting Speech Acts in Japanese Companies

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ABSTRACT

Politeness is a rule of behavior that is determined and mutually agreed upon by a certain community so that politeness is also a prerequisite for social behavior. This study aimed to determine politeness strategy in Japanese communication, especially the use of positive politeness strategy in Japanese companies. The data were focused on the utterances that accommodate positive politeness strategy in ‘ordering’ speech act (*meirei*) and ‘requesting’ speech act (*irai*) in the communication frame in Japanese companies. The method in this study were a case study, literature studies, focus group discussion, and interviews of 22 workers of Japanese companies in Indonesia, with various positions from staff to manager. The results showed that the practice of the directive speech act on ordering (*meirei*) and requesting (*irai*), with the positive politeness strategy used by work partners in Japanese companies. The results also showed the merit of using the positive politeness strategy on ‘ordering’ and ‘requesting’ speech acts to streamline the communication process at work. The findings of the study have some pedagogical implications, especially to overcome the difficulties faced by Japanese language learners regarding politeness strategy on ordering (*meirei*) and requesting (*irai*) speech act. In addition, this study made an effort to improve and streamline the communication skills of Japanese language learners, especially for the purpose of developing communication skills in Japanese companies.

Keywords: *Communication, Culture, Politeness, Pragmatic, Sociolinguistic, Speech act.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Japanese language cannot be separated from its culture. The more general task of understanding the role of cultural differences in communicative processes and their possible relationship to cognitive processes has been a major concern for many linguists, semioticians, and philosophers of language. (Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G., 1989, p. 267). From this, we could know the urgency of pragmatic studies.

Cross-cultural understanding is an important area for pragmatic linguistic study, because cultural differences between each nations can be an obstacles in communication, such as error and mistakes from Japanese language learner. Yule (1996, p. 3) stated that pragmatics is concerned with four area. Pragmatics are (1) the study of speaker meaning, (2) the study of contextual meaning. (3) the study of how to get more communicated than it is said, (4) the study of the expression of relative or social distance.

Speech act is a study very related to pragmatics. According to Austin (1962), speech act is an utterance with an action. By saying something, the speaker also performs an action. Speakers also have goals to be achieved from their interlocutors by telling an utterance. Speech act theory is a theory that tends to examine sentence structure. If someone wants to say something to someone else, then what he puts forward was the meaning or purpose of the sentence. However, to convey the meaning or intent, the person must put it in the form of speech acts.

In the theory of politeness, there was the term called ‘face’ which refers to the reputation of humans as social beings. “Face is the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself. This face is emotionally invested, and it can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to interaction” (Brown & Levinson 1987, p. 61). Brown and Levinson in Rahardi (2005, p. 39) divided ‘the face’ into two, namely ‘the positive face’ which refers to the desire to be approved and ‘the negative face’ which refers to the desire to determine oneself (self-determination). In interpersonal

communication, it can be said that a person's 'face' is always in a state of threat. Brown and Levinson call this threatened situation as the face threatening act (FTA). Therefore, it is necessary to have a politeness strategy not only to reduce or avoid conflict, but also to threaten the face of the interlocutor when in certain situations.

Lin (2009) stated that making requests, as a directive act which involves the speaker's effort to get the assistance of the hearer, is one of the most difficult speech acts for learners, especially second language (L2) learners, because it calls for considerable cultural and linguistic expertise on the part of the learner, and requires a high level of appropriateness for their successful completion.

The previous research that is still relevant with this study includes illocutionary speech acts is the theory of Leech Geoffrey in 1993. Searle in Leech (1993, pp. 163-165) classified the illocutionary acts based on various criteria, namely as follows.

a. Assertives (Representatives)

This illocutionary act is bound to the truth of the proposition expressed, for example, stating, proposing, boasting, complaining, expressing opinions, reporting. Herewith the example in Japanese:

- (1) *Ame ga futteiru.*
The rain is falling.

(Yamaoka, 1999, p. 140)

b. Directive

Directive is one of illocutionary act that aims to produce an effect in the form of actions taken by the speaker. The examples from directive acts include ordering, recommending, begging, demanding, giving advice, etc.

Regarded to Kreidler (1998), sub-speech acts that included in directive acts are (1) ordering, (2) requesting, and (3) recommending. This study aims to clarify how the practice of directive, ordering and requesting speech acts in communication practices in Japanese companies based on politeness strategy from the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987). This speech act of 'ordering' and 'requesting' was chosen because 'order' and 'request' frequently used in the workplace. Herewith the example of directive in Japanese:

- (2) *Te o agero!*
Rise your hand!

(Yamaoka, 1999, p. 141)

c. Commissive

This illocutionary act is bound to an action in the future. The example from commissive acts include promise, offer, and make a vow.

- (3) *Yakusoku suru.*

I will promise.

(Yamaoka, 1999, p. 138)

d. Expressive

Expressive speech acts aim to express the psychological attitude of the speaker to the circumstances implied in the illocutionary, for example, thanking, congratulating, apologizing, criticizing, praising, expressing condolences, and so on.

- (4) *Arigatou!*
Thank you!

(Yamaoka, 1999, p. 141)

e. Declarative

Declarative act is the match between the content of the proposition and reality, for example, resigning, baptizing, firing, giving names, imposing punishments, excommunicating or disposing, appointing (employees), and so on.

- (5) *Ashita kara konaide moraeru kana.*
Can you please not come from tomorrow?

(Yamaoka, 1999, p. 7)

The gap of this research, according to the author, is that the directive study has not been narrowed by specializing speech acts in the realm of business or work environment technically, practically, and applicable. However, Leech and Searle categorize illocutionary acts broadly.

Domestically in Indonesia, previous research studies have been conducted by Arifiany, Ratna, and Trahutami (2016). This study describes the various types of directive speech acts in Japanese. Arifiany et al. explained that the form of the directive is in the form of a command, the directive is in the form of a request, prohibition, permit, and a suggestion in the comic.

The difference can be seen from the data sources and objects used in the study, Arifiany et al. used the comic as data sources, while this study used original speech from Japanese speakers in the mass media and interview. The similarity of this study is to analyze illocutionary directive speech act, but did not mentioned yet the politeness strategy.

Previous research in Japan, conducted by Takehara (2018), analyzed contrastively related to Japanese-English Bilingual Competence on Speech Acts in Politeness. The research method was carried out quantitatively with the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) technique for data collection. The aim of the study was to investigate whether circumstantial bilinguals retain the respondent's speech act competence in their first language after a long time of living in countries where the respondent's second language (L2) is spoken. DCT and interviews were conducted with Japanese-

English bilinguals to Japanese respondents living in the United States.

Takehara (2018) reveals the different competences of bilinguals from speech acts in Japanese, influenced by the use of colloquial language, age of arrival, and length of stay outside Japan in their speech acts, the necessity of *wakimae* (wisdom) and the use of appropriate lexical forms, and the unusual similarity of typical Japanese speech acts.

Based on the questions in the DCT, the Japanese-English bilinguals show typical Japanese speech acts or speech acts influenced by the typical in America. Takehara (2018) shows that bilingual speech acts follow Japanese politeness strategies, and evaluations by Japanese monolingual raters tend to be polite on average. Speech acts that are influenced by American politeness strategies are also observed from various questions in DCT. In this study, the data collection method is different from Takehara (2018), primary data was taken through recording the utterances of Japanese and Indonesian speakers in the mass media as a data source, to then analyze the tendency of speech intent based on pragmatic theory, in order to know the implementation and merits of the positive politeness strategies.

2. METHOD

A qualitative descriptive method was used in this study. Primary data sources were collected from the mass media in Japanese and Indonesian, such as drama series on tv, reality show, news, and other online media. The secondary data were collected from interview and focus group for data validation. The study involved 22 participants (11 Indonesian and 11 Japanese workers) having more than 5 years of working experiences at Japanese companies in Indonesia. The data were collected from December 2021 to August 2022.

Focus groups allowed the researcher to do some interactions directly with the respondents. This provided opportunities for the clarification of responses, for follow-up questions, and for the probing of responses (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

Table 1. The practice of directive ('ordering' and 'requesting') speech acts

No.	Classification	Total (utterance)	Percentage
1	Ordering	59	71%
2	Requesting	24	29%

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Implementation of Directive Speech Act of 'Ordering' and 'Requesting'

This study contained a description of the results which began with the classification of directive speech acts based on their function, 'ordering' and 'requesting'. After that, data analysis was carried out to analyze the implementation of those speech acts, and to find the merit of the positive politeness strategy by Brown and Levinson (1987).

The overall data found was 83 utterances, with the speech act of 'ordering' was 59 data and the speech act of 'requesting' was 24 data (see Table 1).

3.1.1. Ordering (Meirei)

3.1.1.1. Positive Ordering (Positive Command)

According to Kreidler (1998) the positive form included demand, order, direct, instruct, and ask firmly. In Japanese, lingual markers of commanding are indicated by *meirei* (command) forms such as *~te kudasaru*, *~te kureru*, *~te choudai*, *~te itadaku*, etc. In Indonesian, lingual markers of ordering are: "*tolong* (please)...", "*bisakah* (can you)...", "*maukah* (will you)..." etc.

3.1.1.2. Negative Ordering (Negative Command)

According to Kreidler (1998) the act of commanding which is a negative form is in the form of the word forbid (prohibition). In Japanese, lingual markers are marked with *kinshikei* (prohibition sentence), such as *~ru na!* and prohibitive form verbs such as *~naide*, *~naiyouni shite Kudasai*, *~naide kureru*, *~no wo yamete moraenaika*, *~tewa ikenai* and so on, while in Indonesian, the lingual markers for prohibition are the words "*jangan*" (don't), "*tidak boleh*" (you can't), "*tolong tidak*" (please do not), etc. Herewith the sample of the ordering speech act that used positive politeness strategy.

Data (01) - Japanese

Roketto no barubu wa uchi no bijinesu no honmaru nanda! Zettai ni Sayama ni watashite wa ikenai nda! Ato 3-shūkan, koko ga shōbuda.

Rocket engine valves are the core of our business. This absolutely must not fall into Sayama's hands! Only 3 weeks left, here comes the battle!

Data (02) - Indonesian

Katup mesin roket adalah inti dari bisnis kita. Sama sekali tidak boleh jatuh ke tangan Sayama! Tinggal 3 minggu lagi, di sinilah pertarungannya!

This utterance is directive speech act of ‘ordering’. Speaker is a director of Japanese company. Interlocutor are the staff member of the company. The speech occurred when the director gave motivation not to hand over the valve rocket project to a rival company. The purpose of the speech is to instruct all employees to work hard for a common goal.

Regarding to Kreidler (1998), command or ordering has two type, positive command and negative command. Data (01) and (02) is the example of negative command. In Japanese we can find the negative command in *kinshikei* (prohibition sentence). The lingual mark in data 01, the form used *~te wa ikenai* (must not...), this prohibition form is stronger than *~naide kudasai*. The speaker’s position is much higher than the interlocutor, so this positive politeness strategy is possible to use. Regarding to Brown and Levinson (1987), the substrategy of this speech is substrategy no. 13, asking for certain reasons. The director asked firmly to the staff because he do not want the project of rocket valve fail, and that project is very important to company’s future.

3.1.2. Requesting (*Irai*)

In this study, 24 utterances of ‘beg/request’ were found out of a total of 83 total utterances. This request speech act is an expression of what the speaker wants the other person to do or not do. Requests do not assume that the speaker can control the other person. General meaning: a speaker, who is not authorized, expresses his wishes that the interlocutor (not) act in accordance with the wishes of the speaker.

3.1.2.1. Positive Request

In Japanese, the lingual markers of positive requesting are “*~te hoshii*”, “*~onegai shimasu*”, “*~tanomu*”, *~te itadakemasenka*” and so on. In Indonesian, commonly used “*tolong...*” (please...), “*mohon...*” (I’m begging...), “*minta...*” (I want...) etc.

Data (03) - Japanese

Watakushi-tachi, kono-do, rikon suru koto ni narimashita. Ie o utte hoshī.

We are going to divorce this time. Please sell our house.

Data (04) - Indonesian

Kami kali ini akan bercerai. Tolong jualkan rumah kami.

(FJ/NHK/017/SFSEP4/01:15)

The utterance (03) and (04) taken from the Japanese drama “*Shoujiki Fudousan*”, The speaker is a young female client who wants to sell a house and explains the reason for selling the house to a Nagase real estate agent. Not only to inform the facts that happened, but the purpose of this speech is to ask the interlocutor to sell his new house at a high price. Phrases “*~utte hoshii*” or

“please sell...” were verbs that indicated a positive form of pleading.

When viewed from the situation of the word and the variety of language, the strategy used in this speech was the strategy of frank politeness (bald on record). In this speech, the speaker’s position was higher than interlocutor’s, so he cares about the dangers of FTA. “*Ie wo utte hoshii*” was said directly and as it is, so that this speech strategy seems to be ‘bald’ or ‘without strategy’. The purpose of this request is for the interlocutor to act on the instructions requested by the speaker. To make the differences clearer with other strategies, it can also be seen from the examples of speech with positive politeness strategies in data 05 and 06.

3.1.2.2. Negative Request

Negative form requests in Japanese are marked with the form “*~nai de hoshii*”, *~naide moraemasenka*”, “*~nai de kureru*”, etc. In Indonesian are “*tolong jangan...*” (please do not...), “*mohon tidak/jangan...*” (I’m begging you not to...), etc. Herewith is the sample of requesting speech act that used a positive politeness strategy.

Data (05) - Japanese

Don'na nanmon ni mo kanarazu kotae ga aru! Min'na no chikara o dō ka ka shite hoshī!

No matter how complex a problem is, there must be a way out! Please give me some help!

Data (06) - Indonesian

Sesulit apapun sebuah masalah, pasti ada jalan keluarnya! Tolong beri aku bantuan!

(FJ/TBS/014/SREP1/01:29)

The utterance in data (05) and (06) show the speech act of requesting (*irai*). The speech act occurred when Director Tsukuda gave an encouraging speech and asked for the help of employees of a company that was about to go bankrupt and against the company’s lawsuit, Nakashima Kogyo. Positive politeness strategy used substrategy no. 13, asking with a certain reason. This speech act is a pleading utterance with lingual markers in the form of the verb “*~te hoshii*” which means “please”. The story takes place in the Japanese drama *Shitamachi Rocket*. The speaker is a president director (male, age 45 years), and the speech partners are all subordinate staff of the speaker, the average age is 20). The purpose of the speech is to motivate employees to keep running the company, not to give up on the company’s critical situation.

When viewed from the context of the situation he said, speakers use positive politeness strategies. In this speech, a variety of non-formal language is used because the variables that support the weight of the FTA are not significant, the speech is said with fire, to show a positive face to the interlocutor.

3.2. The Merit of the Positive Politeness Strategy of Directive Speech Act of 'Ordering' and 'Requesting'

Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 60) identified four politeness strategies or general behavior patterns that can be applied by speakers, namely (1) Bald on Record (without strategy), (2) Positive politeness (intimacy strategy), (3) Negative politeness (negative/formal politeness strategy), (4) Off record (indirect or disguised strategy).

3.2.1. Direct Strategies (Bald On-record Strategies)

This strategy is used for actions that are not too threatening to the face of the speech partner. More of this strategy is used between two close friends or when the speaker is in a more powerful position than the interlocutor.

3.2.2. Positive Politeness Strategies

Brown and Levinson (1987) stated as with the first strategy, this positive politeness strategy is used for speech acts that are not too threatening to the face of the interlocutor, but the speaker does not have the heart to express it in the form of a command. This positive politeness strategy is widely used between two friends, acquaintances, or parties who are already close, even though they are not very close.

This positive politeness is used to show intimacy to the interlocutor, who is not someone close to the speaker. To facilitate the interaction, the speaker tries to give the impression of having the same fate and as if he has the same desire as the interlocutor and is considered a shared desire that is wanted together. This strategy is aimed directly at the positive face of the interlocutor so that the speaker's wishes are considered as a shared desire between the speaker and the interlocutor.

In addition to showing intimacy, this strategy also functions as a facilitator of social relations with other people. This strategy can indicate that the speaker wants to be more familiar with the interlocutor. It is from this intimacy that cohesiveness in the group can be reflected. This strategy tries to minimize the distance between the speaker and the interlocutor by expressing concern and friendship. Thus the speaker minimizes the FTA.

There are fifteen substrategy on positive politeness which are realized into an action or action as follows: (1) focusing on the person speaking, (2) giving more attention, giving recognition or sympathy to the interlocutor, (3) intensifying attention to the opponent. speech, (4) using markers of group intimacy, 5) finding agreement, (6) avoiding conflict, (7) equating assumptions to public opinion, (8) making jokes, (9)

adding or agreeing to the opinion of the interlocutor, (10) offering assistance or promises, (11) being optimistic, (12) involving speakers and interlocutors in activities, (13) giving or asking for certain reasons, (14) assuming or displaying similar actions, (15) giving gifts.

3.2.3. Negative Politeness

Negative politeness is a strategy used when the speaker is aware of a degree of threat that his interlocutor can accept. This can happen, for example, in language acts with strangers, between superiors and subordinates, and between young people and older people.

3.2.4. Indirect Strategies (Off-record Strategies)

The indirect strategy is used especially if there is a more serious threat to the face of the interlocutor. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 60) assert that politeness can also be measured by looking at the social distance between the speaker and interlocutor, the close social status between the speaker and the interlocutor (speaker and interlocutor relative power), and the high and low ratings speech act (degree of imposition between speaker and interlocutor).

One of them is the theory of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson, which is known as the "face-saving or face-saving" view. Rahardi (2005, p. 39) explains that Brown and Levinson divide the face into two, namely the positive face (positive face), which refers to the desire to be approved (being approved) and the negative face (negative face), which refers to the desire to determine oneself (self-determination).

In interpersonal communication it can be said that a person's face is always in a state of threat. Brown and Levinson call this threatened situation the face-threatening act (FTA). Therefore, a politeness strategy is needed not only to avoid conflict but also to threaten the other person's face when in a certain situation.

From 83 total utterances, it can be seen that each speech act used the politeness strategy; 30 out of 83 data used positive politeness strategies. From the collected data, it can be seen that in 'Ordering' and 'Requesting' speech acts in communication practices in Japanese companies, the positive politeness strategy is useful to: (1) show intimacy to the interlocutor, (2) facilitate the interaction, the speaker tries to give the impression of having the same fate and seems to have the same interest, (3) strengthen the social relations, so that we can convey orders and wishes without causing conflict at work.

In Japanese and Indonesian communication practices, the positive politeness strategy was usually used between a friend, superior to lower staff, etc. The language form mostly used the non-formal language form (*futsuukei*). It was because of the close social distance.

4. CONCLUSION

A positive politeness strategy was very important to strengthen social relations for smooth communication. As previously discussed on the theoretical basis, directive speech acts occur when speakers (1) want the interlocutor to do something (command), (2) want to request something, and (3) want to recommend something to the interlocutor. Politeness strategy, especially positive politeness strategy also needed not only to avoid conflict but also to threaten the other person's face or show the positive face of the speaker when in a particular situation.

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